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OO RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM RUEHNH  
DE RUEHGO #1812 3530821  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5523  
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE  
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE  
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0075  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 3667  
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 7173  
RUDKIA/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 0770  
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 2977  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0640  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 001812

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STATE FOR EAP AND IO; PACOM FOR FPA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/27/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: OPPOSITION LEADER MISSES ANOTHER BIRTHDAY PARTY

REF: RANGOON 1670

Classified By: P/E TLManlowe for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (U) Summary: On December 18, friends and relatives marked the 45th birthday of Ko Ko Gyi, detained 88 Generation Students (88GS) leader, at a Rangoon monastery, making offerings to the monks and feeding approximately 800 supporters who participated. Military Intelligence monitored the event, but did not interfere. The same evening, authorities extended the remand of Ko Ko Gyi and the other the four detained 88GS leaders for another two weeks. Organizers promised other political activities in the future as they gain confidence and try to build public support for change. End summary.

#### Strength in Numbers

¶2. (U) Emboffs joined about 800 supporters as Ko Ko Gyi's family and friends recognized his 45th birthday with a religious ceremony at a Rangoon monastery. Ko Ko Gyi remained in detention with four other 88 Generation Student leaders since September 27 (reftel). Fellow members of the 88GS joined representatives from NLD leadership and youth organizations, ethnic groups, Veteran Politicians, former prisoner Su Su Nway, and others to give offerings to the monks and share in a meal provided by the sponsors. Cards with Ko Ko Gyi's photo and quote: "Our political belief for our country's development is to solve political problems peacefully without violence - we are determined," were distributed. Military Intelligence agents photographed and filmed the all-morning event from an adjacent building, but did not interfere. A prison van, stationed on the main road in the morning, eventually moved out of sight.

¶3. (C) The regime's strict surveillance and limits on the size of gatherings severely restrict opposition members' ability to meet each other. Ko Ko Gyi's birthday ceremony gave opposition groups three hours to hold discussions freely on the monastery grounds. Participants described these discussions as a major benefit of these sort of events. Nay Tin Myint, an 88GS leader, said the event also showed the regime that the opposition is united, has good intentions and that they can call together a significant number of colleagues to support each other. Other 88GS members believe

that the regime's concern about UN Security Council (UNSC) action keeps officials from arresting them. The 88GS leaders said they would decide on future events based on developments in the UNSC and the reaction of the regime. They do not want to do anything that would harm efforts to seek a resolution on Burma.

#### Remand Extended

¶4. (SBU) The latest two-week remand for Ko Ko Gyi, Min Ko Naing, Min Zeya, Phone Cho and Htay Kywe expired on December 18. Ko Ko Gyi's brother noted that last year, Ko Ko Gyi celebrated his first birthday out of prison after 14 years, and expressed hope for his release that day. However, authorities extended the detainees' remand at Seik Kan Township Court in Rangoon for another two weeks, to expire on January 1. On that date, authorities must make a decision or move the case to yet another court.

¶5. (C) Jimmy, another 88GS leader, believes that the GOB will not release the 88GS detainees until the National Convention concludes in January or February, because some officials allege that they will violently disrupt the proceedings. According to him, even the Chief of Police does not believe this would occur, but will take no chances by releasing the student leaders.

¶6. (C) Comment: Even though few of the participants expected the detainees release, they were pleased with the turnout which helped all involved to gain confidence and show unity. They remain determined to increase their "political temp" while building public support. End comment.  
VILLAROSA